

Fulton 'Launched' Engin Open Hous

Paine Explains Event's History

Robert Fulton, inventor of the steamboat, played an interesting part in the unique beginning of Engineering Open House, which opens for its 55th year today and Saturday.

According to The Daily Illini of April 16, 1936, Open House originated in 1907 for the purpose of raising money to erect a memorial for Fulton at New York City.

Ellery B. Paine, professor emeritus of electrical engineering, and head of the department of electrical engineering in 1936, wrote an article in that year explaining the start of Open House.

In its early years, Engineering Open House was strictly an electrical engineering show. Since World War II, it has progressed to include every engineering department on the campus.

Paine's article focuses the dedication of the students who began the annual program. "Fulton Invents Steamboat . . . And So E. E. Show Results" is the name of the story, selections of which appear below:

"A contribution of \$289 to the Robert Fulton memorial fund of New York City in 1907 brought the students in the department of electrical engineering into the limelight.

"Those in charge of the Fulton memorial began asking about the University of Illinois and why the students in this department should have sent one of the larger contributions received for the fund.

"The fact of the matter is that a few of the enterprising young men who were students at that time, on hearing of the plan to raise a memorial in honor of the famous Robert Fulton, conceived the idea of having an electrical exhibition in the laboratories of the department, charging a few cents admission to the same, and then sending the money so received to New York.

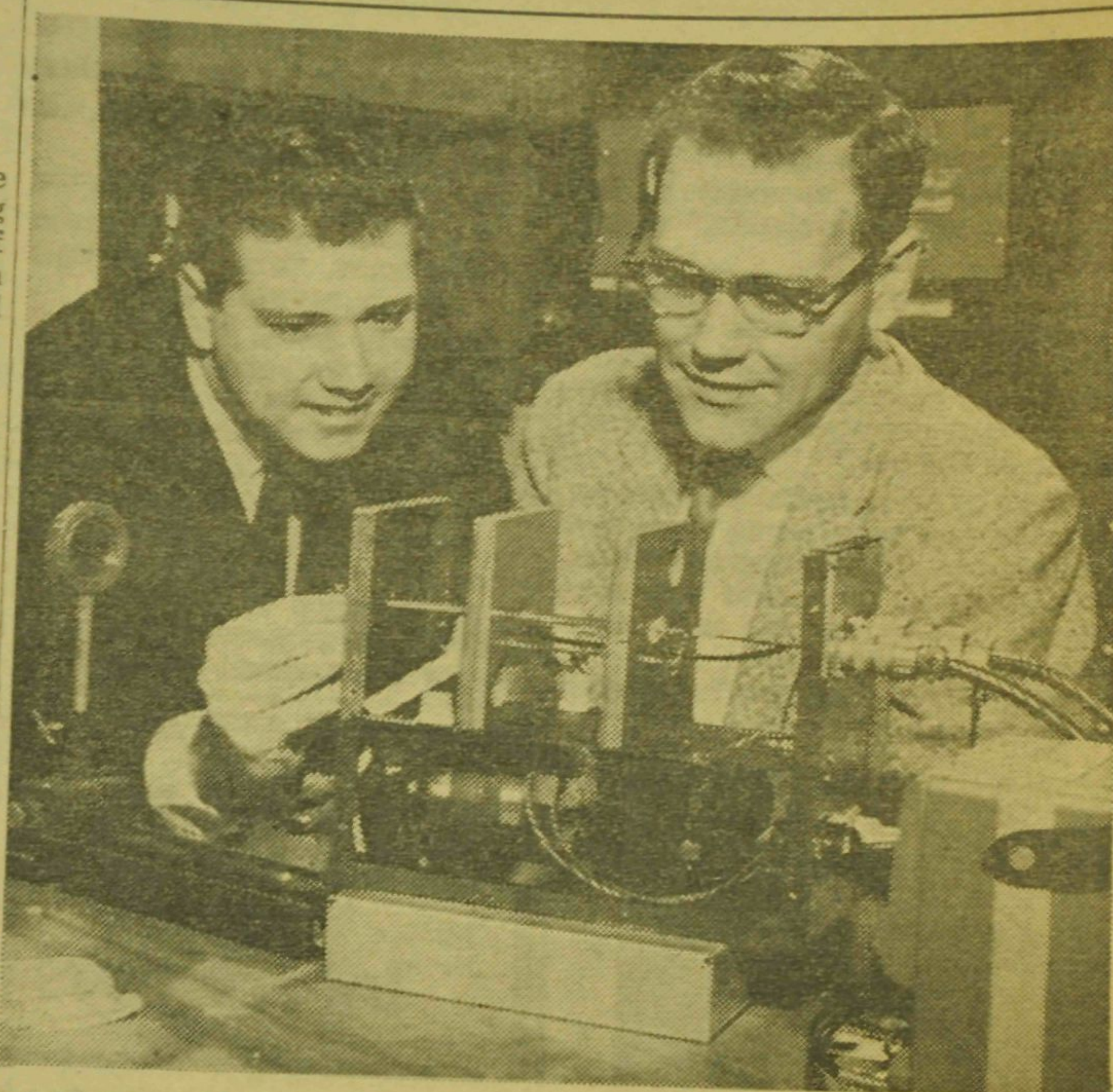
"Permission was granted the students to have the laboratory for a day to get ready the exhibits and to hold the show the following evening. A good job of publicity was done, and the attendance and the corresponding receipts from admissions were far beyond anything which the students had imagined could be possible.

"This enterprise resulted in more than the substantial contribution to the Fulton fund. The students who participated found the conducting of the first show a highly interesting adventure. They were dealing with the same basic principles which were being studied as class work, but how different it seemed to run the machines to awe and amuse those who came to the show than to perform the usual laboratory experiments!

"It was natural, therefore, that these young men should wish to repeat the performance, and so again in 1908 another electrical show was staged. . . .

"At first the teaching members of the department looked with mild interest on the students' proposal to hold an electrical show. But there was practically no expense for the first show except for the printing of tickets and for advertising, and so the financial risk was slight.

"The succeeding shows were,



A RUBY ROD THAT SENDS LIGHT bouncing back and forth with increasing intensity forms the heart of this complex electronic device, the Maser. This light-amplifier being examined by Rodney D. Elmore (left), senior in engineering, and Gary N. Fierstein, junior in engineering, is among more than 250 displays to be show today and Saturday at the Engineering Open House.

however, more elaborate, and with each show the sums expended for staging the event mounted higher and higher. Then the faculty raised the question of financial responsibility and asked who would meet deficits if, because of poor attendance for any reason, the receipts should be less than the expenditures.

"The enthusiastic students met successfully all objections. Pledges were signed by interested students binding themselves to pay in case of deficit. Gradually a fund was established to finance future shows. The date of the show was fixed so that much of the work of preparation could be done the Easter vacation.

"A careful study of all the factors entering into this problem lead members of the teaching staff to the conclusion that the electrical show is in reality of benefit to the students who participate. A student who works up an electrical stunt for the exhibit and demonstrates the same to the public him-

self becomes for the time being a teacher.

"All teachers know by experience there is no surer way to learn than to teach. It is but natural that the individual student should have a peculiar enthusiasm and interest in the exhibit which he is working on, an interest quite different from that which he finds in studying the usual classroom assignment.

"Then too, the students get a valuable experience in working together in organizing the show. The show enterprise calls for a great variety of abilities and talents, and in this respect the show is not unlike the real engineering undertakings which the students expect to engage in following the completion of their University careers.

"From the point of view of the public, the show is both entertaining and instructive. Many examples might be cited of principles which have been demonstrated in the electrical show years ahead of their commercial application."